

REMARKS OF WILLIAM J. CASEY

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before

544th STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE WING, OFFUTT AIR FORCE BASE

Omaha, Nebraska

Saturday, 26 October 1985

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Thank you, General Doyle, for your very kind introduction. I would like to thank General Doyle and Colonel Neal for making my briefing and discussions today so interesting and productive. I am privileged to be here with all of you this evening to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the 544th Strategic Intelligence Wing, and particularly to address the theme you have selected for the occasion, "The Evolution of Intelligence."

The really splendid and imaginative presentation of the history of intelligence stole my thunder, but let me start with my own first experience in intelligence work with the OSS in Europe. In those days, we were parachuting Europeans into Germany hoping that they would be able to stumble on a German unit to observe, identify, and radio word on where it was and in which direction it was heading. Today, in contrast, we know intimate details of Soviet military forces, the weapons industry which supports them, the capabilities and deployment of the weapons produced including those which are shipped widely around the world to Soviet-backed forces from Afghanistan to Angola, from Cambodia to Ethiopia and Nicaragua, and many other countries as well. This is accomplished through wonders of photography, electronics, seismic science, acoustics, and many other black arts. The development of this intelligence apparatus was precipitated by two developments in the late 1940s--the sealing off of Eastern Europe, pretty well completed by the Czech coup and Berlin blockade of 1948, and the explosion of an Atomic bomb by the Soviets in 1949. This quickly led to the recognition that the nation lacked the vital intelligence needed to assess and deal with this new threat.

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Curiously, no application of overhead reconnaissance was made to assess the threat until about 1950--pretty much about the same time as your Wing came into being.

It was soon realized that conventional intelligence collection on Soviet military R&D, production, and deployment was only marginally effective. Simply put, we had no "firm" data on what they were doing or planned to do. And Soviet secrecy and counterintelligence procedures were simply too strong for us and our allies to make much headway.

We found that HUMINT coverage of Soviet military activities was inadequate. Most of the information we had at that time on Soviet R&D was garnered from returned German PWs and scientists, and refugees. This information was dated and limited to small areas of the Soviet Union. Worst of all, the information was subject to the human frailties of bias, poor memory and guesstimation.

The policymakers recognized a critical need for renewed photoreconnaissance in 1949. With the help of the British and certain other allies, we began overflights early in the 1950s. At first, we used modified British Canberra aircraft; later on we switched to RB-47s. It was quickly apparent that neither of these aircraft was completely satisfactory. But what was also apparent was that reconnaissance was what was needed to get the information we so desperately lacked.

After some back-and-forthing between Headquarters, Air Force; Lockheed; CIA; and some others in government, Kelly Johnson and his men set up the now famous Skunk Works in 1954 to design what, in effect, was a jet-powered glider. The U-2 was born. As an aside, it took 18 months from drawing-board concept to operational readiness. And with the U-2, the United States entered the modern era of overhead imagery.

Despite the Soviet shootdown of Francis Gary Powers on 1 May 1960, the U-2 was an outstanding collection platform that served us well in the field of imagery--and in fact continues to this day. But, the Soviet success was short-lived. For it was the U-2 shootdown that was followed in Summer 1960 by the launch of our first imaging satellite. This year, 1985, is thus the Silver Anniversary of satellite photography.

Now the point of this quick history lesson--apart from sticking to the theme of "Evolution of Intelligence"--is to give you some idea of how far we've come--you and us--in the intelligence business since 1950, thanks to the innovative application of technology.

There is no question that our early programs were successful. But there were a number of limitations, and problems, that had to be overcome. And it didn't always come easily.

Let me tick off some of our early problems for you:

- Our U-2 missions were constrained by weather conditions, and consequently were launched only when the planned flight track was 80 percent cloud-free. By the same token, early satellite missions were limited to a few days lifespan, and could not see through the clouds. Today, sophisticated satellites contribute to the intelligence process with less interference due to weather. Better weather prediction allows optimum use of our satellites,

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- There was an inherent time lapse in early film-return systems, and this resulted in a high perishability factor in the data acquired. For example, the Soviet preparations for the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 were imaged on a satellite mission--but the invasion had occurred before the mission could be retrieved and the film processed. Today, we can monitor the development of similar situations on a timely basis. Currently, we monitor the status of the Iran-Iraq war, the Soviet war in Afghanistan, and other important problems daily.

- Both the U-2 and early satellite missions were targeted primarily against the Soviet Union and Communist China. Even so, these missions covered only a small part of a huge landmass. Today, we have global missions covering such diverse worldwide issues as detection of terrorist training sites, narcotics production areas, port and harbor congestion, Soviet weapons exports, assessment of oil/grain production, and observation of natural and technological disasters.

Today, our reconnaissance products form an integral part of the analytical process which enables us to provide more and better finished intelligence to the policy community. Our area experts and our functional specialists in such fields as ballistics, nuclear physics, aeronautics, and economics use overhead photography to supplement information received from SIGINT and human sources. Together they piece together a collage which enables us to better understand developments in the Soviet Union as well as other strategic locations. More specifically:

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The point is that our imagery is pretty good today, but its beginnings were humble.

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At this point, let me turn briefly to the future and mention several technologies we are examining with an eye toward further development of our capabilities in overhead imagery.

The analyst is the basic customer for the raw imagery product--at least initially. And all analysts everywhere demand basically three things of imagery: the highest possible resolution, the quickest possible return, and the greatest possible coverage.

- If the resolution is poor, the product has less value. And the analyst cannot make the critical judgments required.

- If there is slow return or slow handling, we have got history, not intelligence, on our hands. As I've told you, the event may already have taken place--you read about it in the newspapers.

- And, if coverage is limited, the analyst likely will miss key evidence. We must have as complete an understanding of our target as possible.

To meet analysts' daunting requirements, technology has enabled us to make great strides in the last 25 years, but there is still room for significant improvement in imagery capabilities.

Consider, for a moment, that while technology has improved many-fold both the quality and especially quantity of imagery--the reality of stringent budgets has not increased the number of analysts available to interpret the

material. Hence, some means must be found to store, handle, and retrieve raw products. Moreover, "aids" to the analyst must be placed in use to provide that analyst with the ability to look at more material more quickly. This is quite a challenge in itself.

Even more of a challenge may be the demands placed on timeliness of response. Not long ago, the policymaker's response time to threats was measured in weeks, or perhaps days in the most extreme cases. Today, a major crisis--or even a terrorist hijacking--forces action in hours, or even minutes. The intelligence services must adjust accordingly and have the wherewithal to provide the President, the National Security Council, or the strategic forces assigned to SAC, with timely, accurate intelligence now! There is no time for waiting.

In a sense, we are continuing the trend toward improving resolution and coverage--and cutting processing and handling time--that began a quarter of a century ago. This is an important effort in the continuing evolution of intelligence in which all of us in the Community must share.

Modern overhead imagery began at a time when the West sorely needed reliable intelligence on which to base its assessments of Soviet strategic capabilities. It began with an innovative idea, some scientific curiosity, and a willingness to challenge the unknown. That same innovation, curiosity, and willingness to challenge the unknown is needed even more today.

As we tried desperately to retrieve those first satellite film buckets 25 years ago, no one was really aware that a new era had begun which would result in an ever-increasing sophistication of reconnaissance technology;

that we would achieve an almost limitless contribution to national decision-making. If that kind of initiative can be sustained, think what we can achieve in the next 25 years!

Before I leave you in peace to get on with the more enjoyable items on this evening's agenda, let me leave you with one thought. We do share a common heritage and a common responsibility. And that responsibility is to provide the very best intelligence we can to our valued consumers--you to the valiant crews of the Strategic Air Command, and we to the President and his chief advisors. My visit with you today assures me that both customers--yours and ours--are receiving the best intelligence available anywhere in the world.

Thank you for the privilege of being with you.